

The power of nature

A portrait of Antoinette Hunziker-Ebnetter, Founder and CEO of Forma Futura Invest. She is a woman with short dark hair, wearing glasses, a red top, and a light-colored scarf with a colorful pattern. She is smiling slightly and looking off to the side. The background is a blurred outdoor scene with trees and foliage.

as source
of inspiration

Interview

– Antoinette Hunziker-Ebnetter, Founder and CEO
Forma Futura Invest

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Antoinette Hunziker-Ebnetter is a living legend in the Swiss financial world. She has more than 30 years' experience in leading functions at such respected institutions as BEKB, Julius Bär and SIX. The founder and CEO of Forma Futura Invest is known to be a sustainability pioneer and keen advocate of the circular economy. She often finds business inspiration in the natural world, and remains true to her career motto of 'love it, change it, or leave it'.

Where do you get your drive?

You'll have to ask my genes! I think I inherited the entrepreneurial spirit from my parents. Even as a child they encouraged me to stand up for my own opinion, to honour values such as integrity, discipline, responsibility and above all respect for people, animals and the environment – and to pass those values on.

So sustainability is important to you?

Yes. It's very close to my heart. Our planet is a precious gift, and we should be careful with its resources so that future generations can also benefit from them. The same applies to relationships with employees and colleagues. How can I ensure that they continue to enjoy their work and stay healthy, without burning out?

What do you like best about your job?

Identifying complex interdependencies as well as co-creating and implementing meaningful solutions together with other people – often supported by digital tools. One example is using fewer resources to achieve the same goal. I'm also a huge fan of the circular economy. It's incredibly fascinating to see and understand how it is intertwined with the finance, business and energy sectors.

Tell us about a key moment in your career.

As a 26-year-old currency trader, my then boss told me: "You only need to succeed in 70 per cent of your endeavours, in the remaining 30 per cent you are allowed to fail". That statement gave me the courage – having assessed the risk – to put forward innovative ideas and realise them with teams of experts. It also remained my guiding principle when I was self-employed and financially responsible for my family.

You became head of the Swiss Exchange at the age of 35.

It was an exciting time, where I learned a great deal. I realised what an effect responsible business conduct can have, and what could be achieved with the concentrated power of joint effort.

In 2006 you then founded Forma Futura Invest.

Exactly. I had this conviction that great progress could be made on sustainability if resources were dedicated to it. Responsible investing had become very important to me, and something I wanted to

do consistently in the future. Back then it was a niche approach, and uninteresting to many. I disagreed, and that was the start of Forma Futura Invest.

And a healthy corporate culture is important to you there?

It is essential. When we founded Forma Futura, we held countless creative workshops to make sure we calibrated our basic values just right. If you're going to bring ambitious people from all sorts of career backgrounds together into a successful team, they have to have shared values.

“Thinking sustainably, and acting accordingly, is fundamental to me.”

Autonomy is
important in a work
setting because ...

... it allows me to
remain true to my
values and achieve
the related goals.

How do you motivate your team when the going gets tough?

I'm fundamentally a very goal-orientated person with plenty of energy and staying power. Where there are problems, I analyse the situation and then apply the principle of 'love it, change it, or leave it'. If there's no future in something, it's time to leave the comfort zone and head for new shores. There have been plenty of times in my life when I've said no, and started over.

What rituals do you have in life?

I like to be outside and go for a 30-minute walk every day. It isn't just good for the soul, but also inspiring. Nature has much to teach us about the efficient use of resources – which has relevance for business, too. I would like for us to adopt this cyclical thinking and extend our approach to the entire value chain.

You said you like trees?

Yes, because they give a sense of peace and are very resilient. There's a German proverb that says, 'Trees don't grow to the sky'. It means that nothing keeps going in the same direction forever. The same is true of investment banking. There, you have to take gains and losses equally. And sometimes trees are just good listeners!

What advice would you give to managers?

Listen to your team, because they know what needs to be done. Continuously challenge them with outside

knowledge, and make sure that they meet their targets on time and on budget. Employ only the best, and find out who speeds up which projects, and who slows them down. Let the latter go.

What do you expect from external partners like Ergon?

That they have the capacity and willingness to put themselves in the customer's position and identify what they really need. Then use that information to come up with the best possible solution. They must be aware that the partnership rests on mutual trust and it has to work out for both sides in the long term.

If you could start again, what would you do differently?

Everything has its purpose, and is fun. I still find it all very stimulating, and making 'mistakes' is part of the growth process. There have been so many meaningful achievements alongside inspiring people. What more could I want?

“To bring ambitious people with different capabilities together into a successful team, they have to have shared values.”

What are your plans for the future?

I want to achieve what we have set out to do, then successfully hand over my role to the next generation. Thinking sustainably, and acting accordingly, is fundamental to me. />

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